

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN INDONESIA'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

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Abstract

This study discusses the dynamics of women's representation in the political leadership structure in Indonesia, especially in legislative institutions and political parties. Although Law Number 7 of 2017 has set a 30% quota for women, its implementation still faces various challenges, both structurally and culturally. Barriers such as patriarchal culture, lack of political education, and women's dual role as housewives and politicians are among the main barrier factors limiting their participation in politics. Through normative juridical methods and analysis of secondary data from various sources, this study found that women's representation in the legislature continues to increase over time. However, this figure has not reached the set target. In addition, political parties often only meet quotas formally without paying attention to the capacity and quality of women nominated. In conclusion, increasing women's representation requires continuous efforts to overcome existing cultural and structural barriers, so as to create a more substantial and meaningful participation of women in Indonesia's political leadership structure.

Keywords: Women's Representation, Politics, Gender Equality, Parliament

1. Introduction

The world of politics is better known as a world full of intrigue. Politics is often known as a power struggle, a power struggle, which tends to be profitable a handful of people or a group only. In fact, the political arena is also an arena to show participation and get representation. How can this arena accommodate the diversity of society that has been marginalized, including women.

As full Indonesian citizens, women have the right to access and participate in politics. This right is guaranteed in the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945 Article 27 and Article 28, Law Number 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights with a special chapter on Women's Rights, and strengthened by the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women (ratified by Law Number 68 of 1958 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on Political Rights for Women) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women/CEDAW (ratified by Act No. 7 of 1984 concerning the Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) (Heryanto, 2010).

Women's representation in Indonesia's political leadership structure is a very important topic in the context of democracy and gender equality. Since the reform era, Indonesia has undergone significant changes in women's political participation, but structural challenges continue to be a major concern for academics and gender activists. The history of women's political participation in Indonesia has begun since the independence movement, where women figure such as R.A. Kartini have started the struggle to gain space and recognition in the power structure. They not only fighting for the independence

of the nation, but also for the fundamental rights of women in various aspects of life, including politics.

The long struggle of the women's movement gave birth to a rule on affirmative action or special action in the form of women's representation as much as 30% in the legislature. To enter the political arena that is still too masculine, women need special actions as an effort to catch up with them. The rules of affirmative action are contained in Law No. 2 of 2008 concerning political parties and Law No. 10 of 2008 which is now perfected into Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections. The 30% quota is an alternative idea to cover the shortcomings left by the concept of representative politics. However, its implementation still faces various structural and cultural constraints. Periodically, women's representation in the legislature has increased over time.

Patriarchal cultural factors are still the main obstacles to women's representation. The male-dominated social structure makes it difficult for women to penetrate the political power base, both at the local and national levels. Existing traditions and social constructions often limit women's space for movement in the political arena. Research from various scientific journals shows that the low representation of women is not caused by capacity or ability, but by non-partisan political systems and structures. Economic capital, social networks, and access to political resources are important variables that limit women's participation. Aspects of education and individual capacity also play a strategic role in opening up spaces for women's representation. The higher the level of education and leadership capacity of women, the greater their chances of competing in the political arena. However, this opportunity is still very limited. Party dynamics in Indonesia also affect women's representation.

Most political parties have not fully implemented the policy affirmative substantively. They tend to meet the quota formally without paying attention to the quality and capacity of the nominated women. The government's commitment to promoting gender equality has been realized through various legal and policy instruments. However, implementation in the field still requires hard work from various parties to transform the existing structure. From the explanation above related to Personal Data, the author will discuss how the level of women's representation in the political leadership structure in Indonesia is? And what are the factors that inhibit the participation of the public in political leadership?

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Representative Democracy and Descriptive Representation

The classical theory of representative democracy emphasizes the importance of citizens' participation through elected representatives in decision-making processes (Pitkin, 1967; Dahl, 1989). Within this framework, descriptive representation — the idea that representatives should reflect the demographic characteristics of the population, including gender — is central to achieving a more inclusive democracy (Phillips, 1995).

In the context of women's representation, this theory posits that political institutions should mirror the gender composition of society to ensure legitimacy, responsiveness, and equality (Mansbridge, 1999). The presence of women in legislative and executive bodies not only enhances symbolic inclusion but also contributes substantively to policy agendas that address gender-specific issues.

2.2 Critical Mass Theory

Critical mass theory suggests that a minimum threshold of representation — often cited as 30% — is necessary for a minority group (such as women) to influence decision-

making effectively (Kanter, 1977; Dahlerup, 1988). This theory supports affirmative action policies and gender quotas as mechanisms to break the cycle of underrepresentation and to initiate cultural and institutional changes within male-dominated political environments.

Applied to the Indonesian context, the 30% gender quota introduced in electoral laws (Law No. 2/2008 and Law No. 7/2017) is a practical implementation of this theory. However, achieving numerical presence does not automatically lead to effective influence without structural support and political will (Budiatri, 2019).

2.3. Feminist Institutionalism

Feminist institutionalism offers a framework to analyze how formal and informal institutions affect women's political representation (Krook & Mackay, 2011). It argues that political institutions are gendered in nature, often reinforcing masculine norms, practices, and hierarchies. This theory highlights the interaction between rules, norms, practices, and power relations that systematically privilege men and disadvantage women within political structures.

Feminist institutionalists advocate for a transformation of institutional cultures and practices, not merely reforms in laws or policies. In the Indonesian setting, party gatekeeping, candidate nomination processes, and electoral financing are institutional barriers that hinder women's effective representation (Paramitaningrum, 2016; Puskapol UI, 2014).

2.4. Intersectionality

Developed by Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality emphasizes how multiple axes of identity — such as gender, class, ethnicity, religion, and geography — intersect to create unique experiences of oppression or privilege. In political leadership, women from marginalized groups often face double or triple exclusion due to overlapping discriminations.

This perspective is critical for analyzing women's political participation in Indonesia, where diversity in ethnicity, religion, and region significantly influences access to political capital and opportunity structures (Blackburn, 2004). Intersectionality also allows for a more nuanced understanding of why some women succeed in politics while others remain excluded.

3. Methods

This study uses normative juridical research methods with a qualitative approach. The normative juridical method was chosen because this study examines the implementation of laws and regulations related to women's representation in politics, especially Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning General Elections and other related regulations. A qualitative approach is used to analyze in depth the socio-political phenomena behind the representation of women in the structure of Indonesian political leadership. Data collection was carried out through literature studies by analyzing laws and regulations related to women's representation in politics, scientific journals, reference books, previous research results, and other supporting sources. The collected data were then analyzed descriptive-analytically to produce a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of women's representation in Indonesia's political leadership structure.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Rate of Women's Representation in Political Leadership Structures in Indonesia

The world of politics is better known as a world full of intrigue. Politics is often known as a power struggle, a power struggle, which tends to benefit a few people or a group only. In fact, the political arena is also an arena to show participation and get representation. How can this arena accommodate the diversity of society that has been marginalized, including women.

Representation of Women in the Legislature: The number of women according to the BPS census in 2010 was 118,010,413 and men 119,630,913. Meanwhile, male representation in the legislature reached 82.51 percent and women only 17.49 percent. Therefore, based on these data and facts, it is encouraged to fulfill the representation of women in the legislature because there are many legislative products that are less on the side of women, both at the level of the House of Representatives and the Provincial and Regency or City DPRD. Women as citizens need extra struggle to be able to enter the political arena.

The role and participation of women in the legislative institution (DPR) is something to be proud of. This can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Representation of Women and Men in the Legislature

Era	Woman	Man
1955-1956	17 (6, 3%)	272 (93, 7%)
Constituency 1956-1959	25 (5, 1%)	488 (94, 9%)
1971-1977	36 (7, 8%)	460 (92, 2%)
1977-1982	29 (6, 3%)	460 (93, 7%)
1982-1987	39 (8, 5%)	460 (91, 5%)
1987-1992	65 (13%)	500 (87%)
1992-1997	62 (12, 5%)	500 (87, 5%)
1997-1999	54 (10, 8%)	500 (89, 2%)
1999-2004	46 (9%)	500 (91%)
2004-2009	61 (11, 09%)	489 (88, 9%)
2009-2014	101 (18, 04%)	459 (82, 00%)
2014-2019	97 (17, 32%)	463 (82, 68%)
2019-2024	118 (20, 5%)	457 (79, 5%)
2024-2029	127 (21, 9%)	453 (78, 1%)

(Source: Secretariat General of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024)

The phenomenon of increasing female legislators both at the central and regional levels has also influenced the legislative product. Both in the form of laws and regional regulations that have a more women-perspective. Even in the writings of Vicky Randall (1982) indicate that if there are more women in the decision-making process, then the focus of political life will also change. The most obvious impact will be the expansion of the political scope towards issues and issues that were originally considered not political issues such as child welfare, protection of women's reproduction, and others. Political life will probably be more moral because Women are more concerned with Conventional Politics issues such as the economy, education, housing, environment, and social welfare than Hard Politics such as the budget for arms purchases, war, nuclear, and so on.

On the other hand, the politics of election law has improved with the amendment of Law No. 12 of 2003 to Law No. 10 of 2008 and amended again by Law No. 8 of 2012 which was last perfected by Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Elections which among other things requires that the 30% quota of women applies to the management of political

parties and permanent candidates for legislative members both at the district/city level to the central level. However, when viewed from the table above, the author realizes that the current 30% quota is still just a formality, even in the election of legislative members for the 2024-2029 period, women's representation in politics is still less than the promised 30% percentage.

Women's Representation in Political Parties: Political parties are one of the most important elements in the functioning of a democratic system of government. Political parties accommodate a plurality of aspirations and interests of the community and elections become an arena of democratic contestation for political parties and candidates in order to gain public political trust and mandate (Haris, 2014).

Political parties also have a role to link between the people and the government. There are at least six models of linkage played by political parties. First, participatory linkage, which is when the party acts as an agent where citizens can participate in political parties. Second, electoral linkage, where party leaders control various elements in the election process. Third, responsive linkage, which is when the party acts as an agent to ensure that government officials act responsive to voters. Fourth, clientelist linkage, when the party acts as a means of gaining votes. Fifth, directive linkage, which is when the ruling party controls the actions of citizens. Sixth Organizational linkage, which is when there is a relationship between organizational elites can mobilize or "mobilize" the support of a political party (Muhammad, 2014).

Based on this, political parties can play an important role related to influencing the number of female representations elected to legislative and executive institutions. However, in reality, in the organization of political parties themselves, there are still many political parties that have not shown strong commitment and policy formulations related to equal opportunities for women to be active in political party functionaries and the opportunity to be elected in legislative elections both at the central and regional levels. This phenomenon is caused by many political parties that have changed their orientation from cadre parties to cartels. Because of this change, what is sought is profit and loss, not the initial goal of the formation of political parties as a means of political articulation, political education and connecting the people's tongues.

It will be even more difficult for women to have a career in political parties if they do not have social and economic capital. Because every party administrator no longer attaches importance to his party but sees the profit and loss. We can see this phenomenon where in every legislative election there are always party functionaries who switch parties because the initial party is not accommodated or because it is not compatible with the policy of the party leadership. And this pattern will continue as long as the party is like a cartel (Satriawan and Firmansyah, 2019). Taking an example from the 2009-2014 period, the number of women occupying parliamentary seats only reached 18.04%. Can be seen in the table:

Table 2. Women's Representation in Parliament for the 2009-2014 Period

No.	Political party	Party Seats	Women's Chair	Number of Women in %	Percentage Compared to All Women Elected to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia
1.	Democrat	150	37	26, 67%	36, 63%
2.	Golkar	107	17	15, 89%	16, 83%
3.	PDIP	95	19	20,00 %	18, 81%
4.	PAN	43	6	13, 95%	5, 94%

5.	MCC	57	3	5, 26%	2, 97%
6.	PPP	37	5	13, 51%	4, 95%
7.	PKB	27	7	25, 93%	6, 93%
8.	Gerindra	26	4	15, 38%	3, 96%
9.	Hanura	18	3	16, 67%	2, 97%
		560	101	18,04%	100,00%

It can be seen in the table above regarding the quota of women occupying political party seats, that women in Indonesia still have a fairly small percentage when compared to the number of seats in their parties. This proves that women's representation is still relatively lacking. In fact, if you think about it, the 30% quota is a very minimal number to achieve women's representation in politics. For women, this figure should reach 50% if we want to achieve balanced representation between women and men.

4.2 Factors Inhibiting Women's Participation in Political Leadership

Women's representation in Indonesian politics still faces various structural obstacles that are systemic and institutional. These structural barriers arise from the design of political and institutional systems that have historically been built with a masculine perspective, thus indirectly creating barriers to women's participation. Political recruitment systems that tend to prioritize established figures in traditional political networks indirectly discriminate against women who are generally new to the political realm. This is exacerbated by the dominance of male political elites in the party's internal decision-making process, which often results in policies and decisions that do not take into account women's interests and perspectives, such as:

Lack of Political Education for Women, since independence, Indonesia really hopes for the accommodation of democracy in various areas of life. The opportunity to get access to education for everyone regardless of age, ethnicity, gender and social status. However, the reality is that Indonesia is still far from democracy due to the lack of political education, especially political education for women. Women's political education is useful to free themselves from the inequality of treatment they receive, not as a competition with men in the struggle for power. The main role of a woman is as a mother in the household in accompanying her husband and educating her children and her political role is part of her responsibility to the wider community. There are still many women who do not dare to appear in public due to the lack of awareness of education for women. A woman's level of education is usually influenced by a culture that considers that women are more suitable to work in the domestic area becomes a housewife rather than existing in social activities (Hidayah and Asri, 2023).

Lack of Support for Political Parties, political parties have a very large role in legislative elections, to become the winner of the election it is necessary to place legislative candidates who are most likely to be chosen by the community. In determining the sequential number of legislative candidates, political parties apply several schemes, including based on the support of prospective voters and based on the "desire" of the political party that is prioritized to be seated in the DPRD or DPR. This shows that the priority of placing the top sequential number is usually intended to gain party votes. In a society that is still thick with patriarchy, of course, political parties will prioritize men in the first order as a way to gain votes and their goal is to win elections (Sulastri, 2020).

One of the biggest challenges in increasing women's representation in Indonesian politics is the strong cultural influence in society, such as patriarchal culture that is still strong in Indonesian society is one of the main factors that hinder women's political participation. Social norms that place women as housekeepers and limit their space in the

public sphere make many women reluctant to get involved in politics. Women often experience discrimination and inequality in various aspects of life, including education, employment, access to resources, and political participation. They may be treated unfairly and have limited access to the same opportunities and resources as men. Patriarchal culture can affect many aspects of life, including family, education, economy, politics, and culture. Although much progress has been made in combating patriarchal culture and fighting for gender equality,

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There are still many challenges to overcome to create a more inclusive, equitable, and just society for all individuals, regardless of gender (Kahpi, 2024). Women's Dual Roles, another factor that is an obstacle to women's participation is about the dual role of a woman. Before women took a role in development activities in their area, she was a housewife who also had the responsibility of taking care of her husband and children. So that they have limited time in participating in activities outside the home. This is also still related to the culture that exists in the community and unconsciously it becomes a decline. A woman must be able to manage her time to have a dual role as a career woman and also as a housewife. Women's obstacles to participate in political activities are usually because women have tasks that must be done in the household. A woman who works or does activities in the public sphere in general still have to take care of her household. So sometimes, placing women on positions that are less accountable in getting positions (Hidayah and Asri, 2023).

The lack of women's contribution in the world of politics is also found in the Islamic religious factor, because many people, especially men, view the advancement of women into the world of politics, because according to people who hold such a view that women are essentially only as *ma'mum* cannot become *imams*, and positions in the legislature are considered as being *imams* and violating their own religious rules. What's more, this situation exists in married women, it will be very difficult to enter the world of politics because for married women, the task as a wife is to serve their husbands both in terms of external and internal (Kitfiyah, 2019).

These cultural barriers are increasingly complex because they are internalized not only in the general public, but also in the women themselves. The long process of socialization in patriarchal culture has created a kind of internal "glass ceiling" that limits women's political aspirations. Many women have the potential to experience internal conflicts between the desire to take part in the public sphere and the pressure to meet existing socio-cultural expectations. This phenomenon shows that efforts to increase women's representation in politics are not enough only through structural interventions, but also require a fundamental and sustainable cultural transformation.

5. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the level of women's representation in the political leadership structure in Indonesia shows a consistent increasing trend but still does not reach the expected target. Historical data shows that women's representation in the House of Representatives has increased significantly from 6.3% in the 1955-1956 period to 21.9% in the 2024-2029 period. Despite the continuous increase, this figure still does not meet the minimum quota of 30% mandated in Law No. 7 of 2017. In the context of parties, women's representation also still shows limitations, as seen in the data for the 2009-2014 period where even the party with the highest female representation only reached 26.67%.

This study identifies various factors that hinder women's participation in political leadership, which can be divided into structural and cultural barriers. Structurally, the lack of political education for women is a major obstacle that limits their capacity and readiness in the political arena. This is exacerbated by the lack of support from political parties, especially in terms of placement of serial numbers and candidacy priorities. Political recruitment systems that are still gender-biased and tend to prioritize figures established in traditional political networks is also a significant barrier. Meanwhile, from a cultural perspective, the strong patriarchal culture still limits women's space for movement in the public sphere. The burden of women's dual roles as housewives and politicians, coupled with the interpretation of religious factors that tend to limit women's leadership roles, as well as gender stereotypes and social expectations that still place women in domestic roles, all contribute to women's low participation in politics.

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